

UNIT ASSISTOR LESSONS LEARNED FOR MOBILIZING AD HOC UNITS

One of the myriad of roles for some of the personnel assigned to one of the Training Support Battalions (TSBns) within the 75th Division is that of being an Observer Controller/Trainer (OC/T). Although the Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) may differ from battalion to battalion by authorizing different types of teams (Combat, Combat Support, Combat Service Support), the overall role of the OC/Ts assigned to each battalion is likely the same. A specific duty of the OC/Ts, outlined in Fifth Army Pamphlet 500-3-3-UA, is to perform the duties of a Unit Assistor (UA) for units receiving mobilization orders. In short, UAs are the link between the deploying unit and higher headquarters, providing any assistance necessary to ensure the unit will deploy on time and within timeframes established by Army planners. While at the unit's particular mobilization station, UAs perform a variety of activities, to include but not limited to:

- *Ensuring all Theatre Specific Individual Readiness Training (TSIRT) requirements are executed in accordance with Army standards to ensure the mobilized unit is fully trained and validated prior to deployment.

- *Working with various installation agencies at the mobilization station to ensure the mobilized unit's personnel meet all deployment criteria, ensure the unit has the necessary equipment required to perform its wartime mission, and all soldiers have completed required training prior to deployment.

- *Completing daily reports showing the mobilizing unit's completion status of all Theater Specific Requirements and Unit Assessment Reports. These reports provide all higher headquarters a daily snapshot of the unit's overall status to ensure the unit is on track to deploy within established timelines.

Although the aforementioned list of UA activities is applicable to every mobilizing unit, each unit poses a different set of challenges for every UA. One such challenge is the assistance required for units created ad hoc (i.e. for a specific purpose based on needs identified by the Army). The focus of this article is to capture lessons learned during a recent mobilization of an ad hoc engineer design team from the 35th Engineer Brigade of the Missouri Army National Guard (MOANG). Engineer OC/Ts from the 3d Battalion, 383d Regiment based at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri provided UAs for the mobilization of this unit.

The mission of the 3d Battalion, 383d Regiment is to provide training support to designated

CS/CSS Army Reserve and Army National Guard units in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska to attain and sustain individual and collective premobilization readiness. On order, the battalion provides UAs to directly assist units that receive mobilization orders. The 3d Battalion is composed of both Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) soldiers and includes the following types of OC/T teams: engineer, military police, quartermaster and medical. The battalion's AC engineer team is composed of 4 active duty engineer personnel (2 officers and 2 NCOs) who focus efforts on engineer units within the 4 state regions and beyond, if required. Major Anthony Hofmann and Master Sergeant Mike Dudzik were the UAs assigned to assist the engineer design team from the 35th Engineer Brigade.

The 35th Engineer Brigade is based at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Although the Brigade's Headquarters and subordinate units are client units (i.e. units the engineer UAs habitually work with), this particular mobilization was quite different as the entire brigade did not receive mobilization orders. Instead, the requirement was to mobilize a 17-soldier engineer section to focus on design and construction management in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Although the section was not large in terms of troop strength, this particular mobilization posed the following challenges:

- *No formal Modification Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) existed prior to the unit being mobilized.

- *No Mission Essential Task List (METL) specific to this engineer section existed prior to mobilization.

- *There was not a clear mission statement for the unit, thereby impacting the type of equipment required as well as the collective training needed for the unit to perform its technical mission in combat.

- *The Power Support Platform outline in the mobilization orders (Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri) did not have all necessary facilities to complete the TSIRT requirements; thus, soldiers would have to travel to the Power Projection Platform at Fort Riley, Kansas to complete all training requirements to standard.

- *Since the unit was created ad hoc, a formal staff focusing solely on personnel, training, and equipment had to be designated to assist during the mobilization.

Although these challenges existed, the 35th Engineer Brigade's various staff elements moved forward, completing their mission analysis. During this process, the Brigade selected subject matter experts from units throughout the state of Missouri, manning the section with personnel who possess specific engineering technical skills. The unit officially became the 35th Engineer Brigade (Forward) and

was created from 7 members of the Brigade at Fort Leonard Wood and 10 members from the 35th Infantry Division's Engineer Cell, based at Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

The unit received mobilization orders in late August 2004. The orders designated Fort Leonard Wood as the mobilization station. The unit arrived at Fort Leonard Wood on October 10. Unlike a battalion or brigade-level staff, the 35th Engineer Brigade (Forward) section needed to appropriately staff itself in order to focus on personnel, training and equipment throughout the mobilization.

The UAs provided value-added to the section, helping the unit determine an appropriate equipment list, to include automation equipment. Much of the MTOE-type equipment was cross-leveled by other MOANG units, some of which had just returned from deployment to Iraq. Given the expectation that this section will be working technical design and management, the automation requirements were intensive. Working with the Director of Logistics, the Fort Leonard Wood Training Support Battalion and the Fort Leonard Wood Mobilization Cell, the automation requirements were approved for funding and made available for the team to execute their expected missions. This process proved to be very time consuming and cumbersome. Working with the 35th Engineer Brigade's (Forward) commander, the UAs were able to assist in the development of an appropriate METL. This allowed the section to determine essential individual, section and collective training tasks to better train the unit prior to deployment. The unit completed all individual tasks, mandatory classes, and TSIRT tasks at Fort Leonard Wood from 10-23 October 2004. The section then traveled to Fort Riley to complete mandatory Force Protection Lane Training as well as Stability and Support Training. This training was completed from 24 October to 3 November 2004 and included a live-fire convoy exercise. The unit returned to Fort Leonard Wood on 4 November 2005. From 5-9 November 2004 the unit focused on engineer technical training, provided by instructors from the Maneuver Support Center's (MANSCEN) Engineer School. Coordination with various Engineer School sections was performed by the UAs and the Fort Leonard Wood TSBn and proved very successful.

Training provided by Engineer School focused on such items as Force Protection Design, Auto CAD, Project Management, Soils, Concrete, and Asphalt training as well as training on the Theater Construction Management System. A collective training exercise was conducted from 10-14 November 2004 to enhance engineer technical skills learned during the initial technical training. Colonel Stuart

Hamilton, the Senior Army Advisor for Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri was the 5th Army's representative throughout the process. He also played an integral role in validating the training by the unit, working closely with the UAs to do so. Likewise, Colonel Hamilton performed the same functions as a formal Mobilization Assistance Team, with help from the UAs. The collective training exercise proved to be extremely beneficial. The training was developed by 5 technical engineering experts from the MOANG. These personnel created a capstone exercise focusing on engineer design, quality assurance/quality control, surveying, and construction management. The training was completed on November 14, 2004. Following a ceremony hosted by the MANSCEN Commander, Major General Randal Castro, the 35th Engineer Brigade (Forward) departed Fort Leonard Wood for duty in Iraq on November 17, 2004.

There were many lessons learned by the UAs during the mobilization of this ad hoc. The following is a synopsis of those deemed essential during the aforementioned mobilization:

- *Ensure a Mission Essential Task List (with critical individual, section and collective tasks) is developed to ensure ad hoc units are capable of performing the technical missions for which they have been created.

- *From the start of mobilization, identify a person(s) from the unit who will be the UA's point of contact for personnel, training, and equipment issues.

- *Ensure a daily meeting is established with the following in attendance: Key unit representatives, key installation organizations, the installation mobilization cell, the installation training support battalion, and the UAs.

- *Identify automation requirements early on, ensuring an operational needs statement is completed by the unit. The installation Directorate of Information Management is an essential organization to assist in acquiring any automation equipment.

- *Identify installation agencies that can provide resources to assist the mobilizing unit. For instance, the Engineer School at the MANSCEN provided exceptional assistance in this particular instance.